

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

RSR-01 /090 W

----- 076407

P R 132030Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6852

INFO AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 1385

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MASS, HA

SUBJ: EVALUATION OF AUGUST 11 SHAKEUP IN THE HAITIAN MILITARY

REF: (A) P-AU-P 1384; (B) P-AU-P 1380; (C) P-AU-P 1370

SUMMARY: IN THIS MESSAGE, EMBASSY INITIALLY EVALUATES THE POLITICAL MEANING AND PROBABLE EFFECT OF THE EXTENSIVE SHAKEUP IN THE HAITIAN MILITARY ANNOUNCED AUGUST 11, COUPLED WITH THE AUGUST 9 CHANGES IN THE CABINET. SO FAR, CHANGES HAVE BEEN DECIDEDLY WELL-RECEIVED IN HAITI, IN THE MILITARY AND ELSEWHERE. THE REGIME, BY REPLACING A NUMBER OF GENERALLY UNPOPULAR AND CORRUPT OFFICIALS HAS PUT CRITICS OFF BALANCE AND WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE BOUGHT ITSELF VALUABLE TIME TO PUT HOUSE IN ORDER AND IMPROVE ITS PERFORMANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH SECSTATE FOR COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY FOURCAND IN CONVERSATION REPORTED REFTEL A STRESSED "CLEANSING" OF GOH AS MAIN REASON FOR SHAKEUP IN MILITARY AND THE CABINET (AND CHANGES SHOULD CERTAINLY HELP LESSEN PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION IN THE GOH) EMBASSY BELIEVES MAIN CAUSE OF THE SHAKEUP WAS POLITICAL. AS INDICATED REFTEL B MILITARY CHANGES OF AUGUST 11 PLUS DISMISSAL OF FORMER INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL

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SECRETARY CINEAS FROM THE CABINET AUGUST 9 AMOUNT TO A PURGE

OF MOST PEOPLE IN HIGH POSITIONS IN THE GOH ASSOCIATED WITH FORMER STRONGMAN LUCKNER CAMBRONNE. GEN. RAYMOND, COL. ROMAIN, COL. BRUNET, CINEAS, AND SEVERAL AIR CORPS OFFICERS PURGED IN MILITARY SHAKEUP WERE ALL CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH CAMBRONNE, LEAVING ONLY TWO FORMER CAMBRONNE ASSOCIATES STILL IN HIGH OFFICE: FOREIGN SECRETARY ADRIEN RAYMOND AND DESSALINES BATTALION COMMANDER GEN. BRETON CLAUDE. TO EMBASSY, CABINET AND MILITARY SHAKEUP SIGNIFY EFFECTIVE END OF POLITICAL FUTURE FOR CAMBRONNE AND HIS ELEMENT IN HAITI.

2. SMUGGLING SCANDAL REPORTED BY FOURCAND MAY WELL HAVE BEEN IMMEDIATE PRETEXT FOR REPLACING GEN. RAYMOND, COL. ROMAIN, AND THE OTHERS, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY IN JULY SEVERAL FACTORS SEEM TO HAVE COMBINED TO OVERCOME THE RESISTANCE OF MADAME SIMON O. DUVALIER, THE PRESIDENT'S MOTHER, TO THE CHANGES WHICH HAVE JUST TAKEN PLACE. FOR MOST OF THIS YEAR MADAME DUVALIER IS UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE RESISTED REMOVAL OF THE CAMBRONNE ASSOCIATES, AND MANY IN THE GOH BELIEVED SHE WAS MANEUVERING TO BRING CAMBRONNE HIMSELF BACK TO POWER IN HAITI. IN CONTRAST, THE PRESIDENT'S SISTER MARIE-DENISE, A WIDE VARIETY OF DUVALIERISTS AND MILITARY OFFICERS, AND APPARENTLY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAVE BEEN HOSTILE TO THE CAMBRONNE ELEMENT. THE CAMBRONNE PEOPLE HAVING NO SUPPORT TO SPEAK OF OTHER THAN MADAME DUVALIER, ONCE HER RESISTANCE WAS OVERCOME THE FATE OF CAMBRONNE AND HIS ASSOCIATES WAS EFFECTIVELY SEALED. THE RECENT LONG STAY OF MARIE-DENISE IN HAITI (JUNE 30 - AUGUST 9) MAY WELL HAVE BEEN DECISIVE IN TIPPING THE BALANCE IN THE PALACE. WITH ECLIPSE OF THE CAMBRONNE CLIQUE, MUCH OF THE TENSION, DIVISION, AND NEAR-PARALYSIS WHICH HAS GRIPPED MOST LEVELS OF GOH SINCE THE PRESIDENT'S OUSTER OF CAMBRONNE LAST NOVEMBER SHOULD DIMINISH.

3. EVALUATING EFFECT OF MILITARY SHAKEUP ON INTERNAL SECURITY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO STRESS THAT THE REGIME'S KEY, POLITICALLY-STRATEGIC SECURITY UNITS WERE VIRTUALLY UNAFFECTED BY THE CHANGES. THE SECRET POLICE, DESSALINES BATTALION, AND LEOPARDS WERE UNTOUCHED, WHILE THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD EXPERIENCED ONLY THREE CHANGES (REF B)

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WHICH DO NOT AMOUNT TO PURGE OF THE OFFICERS INVOLVED. DATT REPORTS THAT CHANGES ON THE WHOLE HAVE BEEN WELL-RECEIVED IN HAITIAN ARMED FORCES, PARTICULARLY PROMOTION OF THE POPULAR AND RESPECTED GEN. HILAIRE AND REPLACEMENT OF THE WIDELY-DISLIKED GEN. RAYMOND AND COL. ROMAIN.

4. INITIAL INDICATIONS ARE THAT CABINET AND MILITARY CHANGES HAVE BEEN DECIDEDLY WELL-RECEIVED BY MOST

DUVALIERISTS AND LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY. NONE OF THE
DEMOTED OR DISMISSED OFFICIALS WERE POPULAR IN HAITI NOR
HAD MUCH OF A PERSONAL FOLLOWING. SOME MAY STILL COMPLAIN
CHANGES NOT FAR-REACHING ENOUGH, BUT AS YET THERE ARE NO
INDICATIONS FERMENT HAS INCREASED OR REGIME HAS BEEN
WEAKENED. TO THE CONTRARY, BY EXTENSIVE PURGE OF UNPOPULAR
AND CORRUPT OFFICIALS AND THEIR REPLACEMENT BY OTHERS WITH
A REPUTATION FOR HONESTY IN PARTICULAR, REGIME HAS RATHER
DECISIVELY DEMONSTRATED ITS AUTHORITY, PUT CRITICS OFF
BALANCE, AND BROUGHT ITSELF TIME TO PUT HOUSE IN ORDER AND
IMPROVE PERFORMANCE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: hilburpw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PORTA01385
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS CORCORAN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PORT AU PRINCE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730841/aaaabeed.tel
Line Count: 127
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: (A) P-AU-P 1384; (B) P-AU-P 1380; (C,) P-AU-P 1370
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hilburpw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23-Jan-2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <24-Jan-2002 by hilburpw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EVALUATION OF AUGUST 11 SHAKEUP IN THE HAITIAN MILITARY
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MASS, HA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005